



October 2020

BRIDGES

PUBLISHED BY THE WORLD FELLOWSHIP OF YMCA RETIREES



NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

I grew up being taught – “The truth will set you free”. (John 8:32) Later, as an elected public official, I remember cynical politicians saying “when all else fails, tell the truth”. Today, I am not sure where truth can be found!



We live in a world where authoritarian leaders around the world have coined the phrase “fake news” to describe any fact they do not like. A world-wide pandemic – COVID 19 – that should be approached through a scientific lens, has been corrupted by politicians. Each quotes its own statistics and creates its own set of graphs to prove “My leadership has been perfect and my country is doing better than your country”.

Then along comes a new set of Conspiracy Theorists called QAnon that believes the “Deep State,” composed of a global cabal of blood-drinking pedophiles, was created to “take down” Donald Trump’s Presidency. One of our national media investigated and found this far right conspiracy theory was started by three people who took ONE post and spread it to other social media platforms – for profit. And today, world media outlets actually give time and space to this debunked theory.

The America’s rely on Fluoride added to our water supply to reduce tooth decay, but the rest of the world has either not adopted this approach, or banned it for various reasons. But, the Conspiracy Theorists knew from the 1950’s, during the red scare, that our “left wing” government officials were trying to impose communism on the United States by fluoridating the water!

So, for me I am left with TRUTH being found in YMCA service. Truth is found in the foundational YMCA values of Respect, Responsibility, Honesty and Caring. Truth is found in a YMCA staff person, or volunteer, committing to help an individual, family or community resolve a crisis situation.

Perhaps, during a time of world-wide upheaval, the most important role for active and retired YMCA staff may be to find our own truth and help our fellow citizens find theirs.

So, this fall, let us teach ourselves, and others, how to drown out the background noise, distractions and clutter and focus on fundamental truths that will help us return to

“regular order” as found in 1 Corinthians 13: 4 – 6, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered; it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.”

Phil Dwyer
WFYR Chair

News from Beirut, Lebanon by Jerry Prado Shaw, Past WFYR Chair

I am pleased to let you know that I talked with our good friend Ghassan Sayah. He asks me to convey his greetings to you and other good friends from the WFYR. He is in good spirits and ready to confront further challenges that may arise in the region.

Here is a short message from Lebanon YMCA: All staff and volunteers are safe. No one was physically hurt. Damage in the YMCA office and the warehouse are limited. YMCA staff and volunteers continue to collaborate with WHO and the European Union funding in catering the Medici Vines for the chronically ill needy patients.

As you may know the Lebanon YMCA is the primary organization in the country that distributed free medicines to low income people through a very well-run network of over 150 dispensaries around the country.

Important Notice

WFYR cannot continue to cover the cost of mailing in its current format to members that have not provided us with an email address. The Greater Philadelphia YMCA is experiencing severe income loss due to the pandemic and is not able to continue its generous financial support. Mailing is presently compounded by the fact that many countries are not accepting the newsletter for distribution and they are being returned or discarded. Please see the back cover of this issue for a possible solution.



BRIDGES



2020 WFYR LEADERSHIP TEAM

CHAIR: Phil Dwyer (USA); dwyer_philip@yahoo.com

TREASURER: Kurt Kaboth; (USA); Kurt.Kaboth@gmail.com

VICE CHAIR/USA: Evan Page (USA); evanpage@hotmail.com

VICE CHAIR/AFRICA: Francis M. Asiema (Kenya);
fasiema@gmail.com

VICE CHAIR/EAST ASIA: Kohei Yamada (Japan);
kyamada246@gmail.com

VICE CHAIR/EUROPE: Albrecht Kaul (Germany); albe.kaul@web.de

VICE CHAIR/LATIN AMERICA-CARIBBEAN: Roberto Uria
Mendez (Brazil); uria@uol.com.br

VICE CHAIR/MIDDLE EAST: Ghassan Sayah (Lebanon);
ghassayah@hotmail.com

VICE CHAIR/CANADA: Rich Bailey (Canada);
RichBailey@gmail.com

VICE CHAIR/OCEANIA: John Bindon (Australia)

VICE CHAIR/SOUTH- ASIA: Thomas Thomas (India);
tthomasymca@yahoo.com

COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR: Ken White (USA)
wfyrmembership@gmail.com

BRIDGES EDITORS: Len and Joyce Wilson (USA);
len.wilson@comcast.net

SECOURS SPECIAUX FUND: Bonnie Mairs (USA);
bonnie1673@earthlink.net

IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR: Norris Lineweaver (USA);
lineweavernd@gmail.com

ADVISORS: Prescott Johnson, Edgar Machado, Reg Wake

CHAIRS OF ORGANIZED NATIONAL GROUPS:
BANGLADESH: Sudip Arinda; sudinparinda@gmail.com

BRAZIL: Luiz Carlos Gonzaga; lc.gonzaga@terra.com.br

CANADA: Franco Savoia; fsavoia@shaw.ca

CHILE: Eduardo Clavero; claveroviajes@gmail.com

COLOMBIA: Rose Mary Becerra; rosemarybe17@yahoo.com

GERMANY: Klaus Juergan Diehl; Klaus.j.diehl@gmx.de

HONG KONG: K.F. Lau; peterkflau@yahoo.com.hk,

INDIA: Thomas Thomas; thomasymca@yahoo.com

JAPAN: Shinichi Sakata

KOREA: Kwang Jin Rhim; kjrhim@hanmail.net

NIGERIA: Cornelius Olaomo; ctolaomo@yahoo.com

PERU: Carlos Quinteros; cquinc48@hotmail.com

PHILIPPINES:

SRI LANKA: Vacant at present

SWEDEN: Anita Andersson; anita.andersson40@gmail.com

TAIWAN: Kevin Liu; kevinliu886@yahoo.com.tw

THAILAND: Taweetchai Termkuna; taweeymen@gmail.com

UK: Rev. Graham Clarke; Julia-graham@talk21.com

URUGUAY: Julio Cesar Lagomarsino;

USA: Dale Packer; gdalepacker@gmail.com

(If we missed your group or erred, please let us know.)

THOUGHTS FROM THE EDITORS

The pandemic continues to occupy the thoughts and plans for all of us. Your editors both celebrated 80th birthdays since our last publication. We are pleased to be part of the “80 is now the new 60 generation,” but the pandemic is managing to cramp our normal lifestyle. We are currently sheltering at our shore home, BUT still welcoming friends and family within mostly social distancing guidelines in place. Historically, salt air and sea breezes are a tonic for all kinds of maladies. Our birthdays were quite special this year, with many ZOOM gatherings, messages, videos and even a book recounting our entire lives in pictures and notes. We are determined not to let the pandemic create a severe negative impact on our lives and connections with loved ones and friends.

YMCAs around the world and entire countries are experiencing severe negative impacts that will take years for recovery. Many businesses and some YMCAs have ceased operations. This edition of *Bridges* looks at some local associations and national YMCA movements as they work to find a successful path to a yet undefined “new normal”.

Phil Dyer requested a report on a series of global meetings entitled *Padares*, organized by the World YMCA. Parts of a very insightful report written by YUSA staff member Renatta Ferrari, are in this edition of *Bridges* along with messages from WFYR leaders and members. Renatta’s entire report is included in a comprehensive report covering a series of meetings to examine **THE YMCA AND COVID 19** by the World YMCA. Readers are encouraged to visit www.ymca.int for findings and conclusions.

Your editors thank members around the world that continue to send articles and coverage of meetings or activities of retirees. Readers are always invited to submit personal reflections or events in retired life or activities of their local YMCA that would be of interest to other retirees as we all find our way through these difficult times.

Best wishes to all our readers. Stay safe, and treasure personal connections whenever possible.

Len and Joyce Wilson

Please send photos or articles to Len Wilson:
1101 Washington Avenue, #307
Philadelphia, PA 19147, or
len.wilson@comcast.net



WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

Germany

How we strengthen the relationship with our older members by Klaus, Jürgen Diehl

To our German YMCA Seniors Initiative belong 320 members with a growing trend. Our members are not only former YMCA professionals, but also volunteers who served the YMCA for example as board members on local, regional or national level. That's the special German situation as regards the composition of our membership. Because of old age or illness a growing number are no longer able to participate in our annual meetings or our city excursions to visit YMCA movements in other European countries. Therefore it is indispensable to maintain the connection to our older members in different ways. With our annual magazine *ANSTOESSE (Suggestions)* we inform all members about our activities, current events in our national movement and interesting personalities of the YMCA history. But, more important are the personal contacts by visits or phones. Every member receives handwritten greetings to his birthday by one of our board members. From our annual meeting with 100-120 participants we send a letter to all the members who had stay at home because of different reasons. These letters are personally signed by participants who are known to the addressees. Furthermore the chairman sends twice a year a letter to all of the members with current informations of our activities and ongoing projects. We know, that all of this is only a modest contribution to maintain the connection with our older members. But, many grateful reactions show us that our older brothers and sisters do not feel isolated or cut off from our community.



Klaus Jürgen Diehl, Chairman, YMCA Seniors Initiative

Thoughts During Covid 19 by Günter Ozdyk

Many of us in the western world, are experiencing for the first time what it means to live in extreme situations. Ebola in Africa, Beirut explosion, war in so many countries, Moria on fire, people dying on the Mediterranean sea -- We all hear the news but this is far away. But now we all have to deal with Corvid 19 and survive. Many now get an idea of what it means to be directly affected. I think most of us have also realized that we still

live privileged lives thanks to our strong health systems and strong economy.

I hope this experience will lead to more solidarity, compassion and empathy with migrants and all other suffering people.

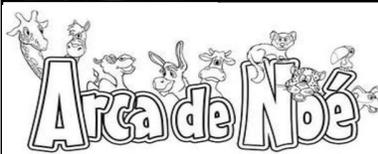
As YMCA retirees, we can promote tolerance and charity. We have to open our mouth, over and over again. We must not remain silent, when human rights are violated, when we see hatred, xenophobia, antisemitism, and nationalism.

World Brotherhood Fund Responds to Crisis by Norris Lineweaver

Like a bridge over troubled waters, the World Brotherhood Fund responded to the urgent call of **Carlos Sanvee** from Geneva, to help support needs of retired colleagues impacted by COVID. **Dale Packer**, President, YMCA Alumni USA, worked with Fund leaders **Rich Hill** and **Bob Hastedt** to provide a precedent setting grant of \$200,000.



Left: With calm leadership, Dale Packer discusses the urgency of the Covid pandemic and how it impacts Y Retires without pensions around the world.



LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN YMCA OF RETIRED SECRETARIES ASSOCIATION
OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER "ARCA DE NOÉ NEWS" - YEAR VII, ISSUE # 53 | AUGUST, 2020



WORLD YMCA 165th Anniversary

On August 22, 1855, nine Young Men Christian Associations' delegations signed the "Paris Basis." The document remains today the guiding light of the global YMCA Movement. It is a day to remember that we were created to connect our members with our common ideals of Peace and Justice for all; a day to celebrate our achievements and face challenges with the same spirit of courage and love



WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

YMCA Padares Overview *by Renata Ferarri*

The following is an edited report on the continuing process by the World YMCA to reposition local YMCAs to meet the challenges of COVID 19. Bridges is indebted to Renata Ferrari, Senior Director of Global Advancement of the International Group of the YMCA of the United States for her personal leadership in the process and excellent report, the entirety of which can be accessed on www.ymca.int



**Renata Ferarri,
Senior Director of
Global Advancement**

Under the leadership and convening of the World Alliance of YMCAs in July, 185 YMCA staff and volunteers from local, regional, and national YMCAs hailing from 56 countries from Albania to Zimbabwe, gathered in a series of virtual “Padares”. Padare, a Shona word meaning meeting place, is a Zimbabwean tradition of people coming together to receive and share wisdom, especially concerning community problems.

The purpose of the YMCA Padares was to share wisdom, learning and knowledge to co-create a new and sustainable normal for our YMCAs in the face of this crisis.

Each Padare Group had between 20 and 25 participants including one facilitator and one documenter. Facilitators and documenters were staff and volunteers from around the world who had registered for the Padares and were invited to serve and trained by the World Alliance for the role. Each Padare Group had people from at least 15 different countries!

All groups discussed and analyzed five basic questions:

- The trends that people are observing right now
- The risks and opportunities for the YMCA
- The areas for action
- Responses from the YMCAs
- Principles to guide future action

EMERGING TOPICS

A TRUSTED AND RELEVANT PARTNER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The four Padare groups that focused on Youth worked on the question **“How can the YMCA become a relevant and trusted partner for young people, helping build**

their own and their communities' resilience in the face of global crisis?”

The Youth Padares recommends the following **principles to guide future action:**

Be self-reflective and revisit who we are as an organization
Listen and understand youth, how they are different.
Co-create with young people intentionally. Youth co-creation isn't a favor, it's the way forward. Take the YMCA to young people, instead of bringing young people to the YMCA

Build digital competence and access

Look to the community for answers

Share what you learn with others internally

Look outwards at what others are doing as well as inwards

Keep young people and children as the primary focus

Turn passion into action

Stay true to our mission

Be open and honest, like a child (1 Corinthians 13: 11)

Entrepreneurship is key to boosting youth capacity

Innovate- this is the time for us to have new and creative ideas to help adjust to the situation

Provide space for agency, trust, transparency, and sustainability.

Empower people - release your power and give others the opportunity to lead

Mentor young people – provide structure for human to human relationships

Stop being so focused on the operation and business model as opposed to youth and community

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY

The two Padare groups that focused on Building a Sustainable Recovery worked on the question, **“How can we build a sustainable economic recovery for the YMCA from the Covid-19 crisis?”**

The Sustainability Padares recommend the following **principles to guide future action:**

Radically re-think how to shift towards multiple streams of income

Leverage the YMCA future off global issues

Move from a facility-based movement to a program-based movement

Support the mental health of YMCA staff & members



WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

YMCA Padares Overview by Renata Ferarri

Stay ahead and lead in inclusion

We need to act as a community to protect our brand and value it.

“No stories without data; no data without stories”.

Focus on Core Mission

Don't fight over the same small [funding] pie; grow the pie

ADAPTIVE YMCA

The three Padare groups that focused on Adaptive YMCA focused on the question “**What does an Adaptive YMCA look like?**” The groups identified **trends** including: the sharp move to the digital world impacting work, education and daily life, fast growing youth unemployment, mental health issues, politicization of COVID-19 in some countries, increased domestic violence, misinformation and fake news, and youth leaders creating new networks.

The Adaptive YMCA Padares recommend the following **principles to guide future action**:

Ensure open, energetic, reflective, adaptive, pragmatic and inclusive leadership, prepared to make choices and embrace change as the new reality

Deliver bold community solutions anchored in the YMCA mission and guided by core values

Relationships, collaboration, and partnerships are foundational to new solutions

Listen to new emerging community needs and create new solutions, new programs.

Speak less and listen more

Develop lean, agile and nimble governance structures

Diversify sources of funding

Empower young people, inclusion is not enough

Treat imagination, resiliency, and adaptability as values

Provide safe spaces for people

Strive for decreasing digital poverty

Harness the power of the network

Plan for resilience: focus on how we will respond to the next crises

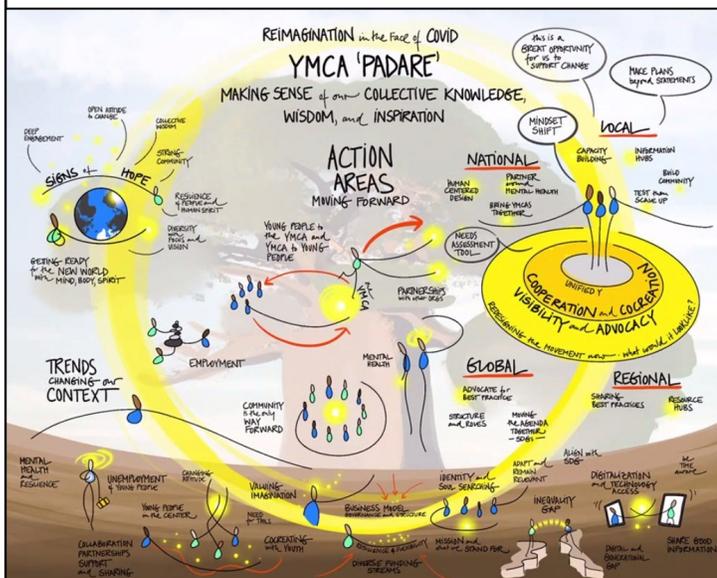
Create systemic change

NEXT STEPS

A small group of delegates across all Padares (one delegate per PADARE group) will meet twice in Sense-Making Sessions to build a shared picture of what's important for the YMCA across the themes of young people, financial sustainability and adaptive YMCAs. The group will prioritize potential action areas to consider in responding to COVID-19 and draft considerations for the future of the YMCA movement.

As a result, the group will create the basis for the **YMCA Adaptation Handbook**, including context changes, actions YMCAs should be paying attention in the short and medium-term to respond to COVID-19, and the principles that should guide YMCA action through this crisis. In addition, the group will draft the inputs for the **YMCA North Star process** to respond to the question of how the YMCA will recover in a way that sets it up for a thriving future, including trends, future-oriented insights, prioritized principles to guide action, and a manifestos for an Adaptive YMCA.

Bridges encourages readers to examine the complete reports on www.ymca.int





WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

Special Report for Bridges from the World YMCA

Trees and wisdom go hand in hand, and the oldest are the wisest. Trees give us good advice: to stand tall and proud, to go out on a limb, to remember our roots, to drink plenty of water, to enjoy the view. And we give ourselves good advice when we sit down and talk under trees, as the YMCA has done – metaphorically – in the face of the upheaval of Covid. We have sought to learn from the resilience of the tree, in the face of the metaphorical storms and tree-cutters that would uproot us.

Each named after a tree, the nine Padare virtual round tables of July and August 2020 – involving 189 people in 56 countries – came to a conclusion in September with two ‘Sensemaking’ sessions designed to distil the best of our collective wisdom and inspiration, and translate it into action points that will guide us through Covid – and beyond.

Renata Ferrari, Senior Director of Global Advancement at YMCA USA, prepared a comprehensive summary of the talks, which has informed the Sensemaking sessions.

The sessions themselves had looked at three questions: How can YMCA evolve as a trusted partner for young people, building their resilience in the face of global crisis? How can YMCA build a sustainable economic and financial recovery from this crisis? How can YMCA become an ‘adaptive’ organisation, moving with the times and the needs?

They looked at all the opportunities - and all the threats – facing both young people and the YMCA at this time. *“Young people and YMCA must be synonymous”,* says World YMCA Secretary General **Carlos Sanvee**. *“The rethinking that we need to do now in the face of Covid is about ensuring that what we do is always about nurturing young people – body, mind and spirit. We are one of the world’s leading youth empowerment organisations. And ‘empowerment’ is the word: we believe in young people not as passive victims, or as afterthoughts to the adult world, but as dynamic agents of change, bridgers of divides, problem solvers – as the leaders of today, not of tomorrow.”*

Artist **Viola Clark** was on hand to make sense of the sensemaking, in the form of a live drawing – done as she listened to the online ‘Zoom’ debate – capturing insights as they were shared. She captured much of the soul-searching: if we didn’t already exist, would we set ourselves up? And if we did that, would we do it like we are now, or in another

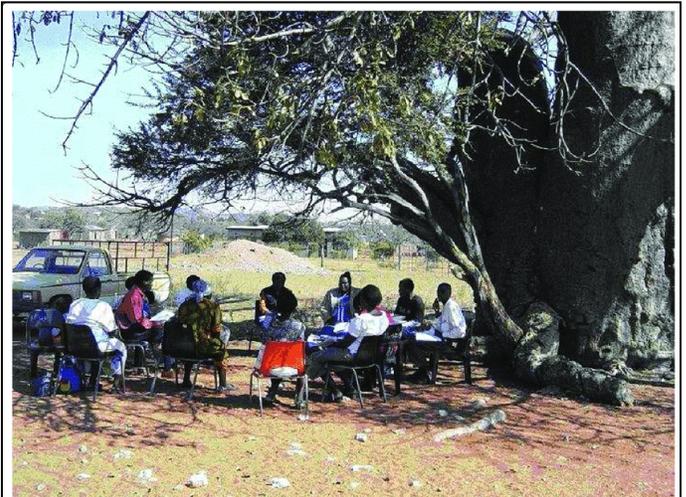
way? She captured the urgency: now is the time to act. She sensed the anxiety – of the threats to the YMCA’s traditional way of doing things, and of the challenges that it faces, and above all that young people face. (See page 5.)

Greatest among these are the [mental anxiety amongst almost 90% of young brought on by Covid](#), the [turmoil in schooling and further education that has affected 90% of young people](#), the shocking fact that [1 in 6 young people worldwide have lost their jobs](#), and many more will follow.

And wherever we looked, we saw inequality, not least in the obvious conduit to the future which is digitisation. Covid may accelerate the fact that the world is moving online, but the digital divide remains such that ‘only’ some [4.5 billion people worldwide have internet access](#), meaning that almost 3.5 billion don’t.

But the Sensemaking sessions sensed hope, and they wanted the Movement to touch and smell that hope. There was an abiding sense of the Movement getting ready for a new post-Covid world, in body, mind and spirit. The whole world is ‘re-setting’ in the wake of Covid, and the YMCA must not just follow it, but walk alongside, even lead it.

What next? The World YMCA will issue an Adaptability Handbook later in 2020: the definitive guide to the opportunities that are now presented to YMCAs, to reimagine themselves and their activities in the face of Covid, and in the ultimate goal of serving young people.



Padare – where YMCA followed the lead of communities who sit under trees and talk



WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

Reflections on the Pardares Experience from UK WFYR Member, John Naylor

Chair **Phil Dwyer** asked some questions regarding my participation in the **Pardares** process.

1 How did it involve my personal experience?

In preparation for the Padare, I reflected on my experience, not only from a YMCA perspective but also from the half dozen other not for profit organisations where I have governance responsibilities.

It was the first time I had taken time and space to reflect across them all and will be very helpful in helping to shape my future thinking and actions.

It has already been helpful, yesterday, in a steering group of UK Chartered Management Institute looking at the future shape of management in UK, post covid.

2. How was it different then our traditional workshops?

While I had attended online webinars and Board meetings on Zoom, this was the first international consultation, which embraced such a wide range of ages and roles in an organisation.

The leadership style, demonstrated by our Leader David French, was very enabling so that all members of this varied community felt equally valued. Some of the most memorable and worthwhile contributions were from those who nor-

mally would not have such potential direct input into World YMCA policy and processes, particularly young people.

There has been much discussion during covid about the way organisations have been delayed, as a result of greater use of e-media. Padare demonstrated it in action.

3. Should it continue?

Yes at appropriate times with a clear purpose for each Padare.

The process itself was valuable. It will be interesting to see the results of combining the outcomes from all the groups.

It provides an important way of Movement engagement across normal organizational boundaries and can ensure thinking and action is rooted in what is happening on the ground.

4. Any recommendations?

English was the language of our group. Were any major parts of the Movement excluded by language?

Language will have influenced the mix of nations in the groups. However, there was enough variety in our group to ensure a rich discussion. Was this a common experience?

Our group time overran. This was not a problem in terms of the process but may have been for those on tighter schedules. Should timing be examined?

Reflection: Live or Exist (excerpted from *Arca de Noe*, August, 2020)

Oscar Wilde expressed: "The least common thing in this world is to live. Most people exist, that's all." This leads us to think about the reason for our existence, deep down, for what we live. In these times when we were forced into a "social distance" to protect ourselves, where we saw our daily routine suddenly interrupted, where paradigms were broken and replaced by others, we were forced to reflect on other issues that previously did not occupy our attention. We had to rethink our time and our activities, which led us to define our priorities, to choose what is important and what is not. Also to value things that we once took for granted and, now, that we don't have them or they are rare, we miss them. This pandemic has shaken us like never before in our previous certainties; brutally taught us that nothing is as true as we believed. And, in this uncertainty, we must ask ourselves how will we emerge as people, what lessons we will have learned from this situation, what kind of society we

will want to build, if we emerge from this more human, more sensitive, more supportive, less selfish and more generous... to paraphrase the English writer, whether we are going to live (with a purpose) or just exist (without it).



BRIDGES
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C/O Ken White
46 Squirrel Rd.
Doylestown, PA 18901
USA

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